

Pre-kindergarten Allowance Program

Answers to Questions Frequently Asked by Child Care/Early Education Programs

1. What is a pre-kindergarten allowance?
 - It is financial aid for up to \$4,000 per child per 12-month period that parents may use to purchase child care/early education that will help children get ready for school.
2. Where must a family live to be eligible for allowances?
 - City of Saint Paul
 - North Minneapolis
 - Wayzata School District
 - Blue Earth and Nicollet counties
3. What if a family already receives child care assistance?
 - If a family is already receiving child care assistance, the allowance may be used to pay the difference between what child care assistance pays and the total fees charged to the family. It may also be used to pay for other parent charges, such as costs for field trips.
4. How much can a family earn to be eligible for the allowances?
 - Families with incomes of less than or equal to 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible to receive allowances. For instance, a family of four would qualify for allowances if the family income is \$39,220 per year or below.
5. Which children are eligible, and for how long?
 - Children who were 3 or 4 years old on September 1, 2007 or will be 3 or 4 years old on September 1, 2008
 - Children must be U.S. citizens or legal immigrants
 - Children must not yet be attending kindergarten
 - Funding is available until June 30, 2009
6. What types of child care/early education programs can parents choose?
 - Parents can go to the Parent Aware Rating Tool Web site (www.parentawareratings.org) to find approved Head Start, child care, and school district pre-kindergarten programs. Approval types include:
 - 3-star rating
 - 4-star rating
 - Provisional rating. (Provisional ratings will be displayed as 3 stars on the Parent Aware website.)
 - Provisional approval from the Minnesota Department of Education
 - If parents or legal guardians cannot find an approved program, they can select a program working to achieve a 3- or 4-star rating. For these programs, the allowance can only be used for quality improvement and cannot be used to cover any parent charges or fees.

7. What are the types of things we can use allowances for?
 - Uses allowed for approved programs include:
 - Parent charges or fees (must be covered first)
 - Improving quality (see list of approved quality improvement uses)
 - Increasing duration – the amount of services you provide per week
 - Providing more spaces to serve more low income children
 - Uses allowed for programs that are not approved include:
 - Improving quality (see approved quality improvement uses)
8. Can a family use their allowance to pay for charges for child care they received before the allowance was issued?
 - No.
9. What happens if a family with an allowance chooses to leave my program?
 - The family will be able to take the portion of the allowance not yet paid to your program with them to the next program they choose. You should plan for the possibility that this might happen.
10. How can a family choose my program?
 - You can tell families currently enrolled in your program about the allowance program.
 - A family might find your program on the Parent Aware website, or learn about your program during a child care referral
 - Families need to complete an application and be determined eligible
 - Families then inform the local allowance office of their program choice
11. How will allowance payments be made to my program?
 - You will receive payments directly from your allowance office
 - You will be eligible to receive an advance and future payments based on a payment schedule
12. What kind of paperwork will my program need to do to participate as an approved program?
 - Become approved by achieving 3 stars or 4 stars through Parent Aware (www.parentawareratings.org), or become provisionally approved.
 - Complete a program plan.
 - Complete family agreements with each family bringing allowances to your program.
 - Send the names of the children enrolled in your program one week before each payment is due.
 - Send a report at the end of the after June 30, 2009 summarizing the number of children enrolled and how your program used the allowances.
13. What kind of paperwork will I need to do if my program is not approved and a parent uses their allowance in my program for quality improvement only?
 - Sign a participation agreement with Parent Aware.
 - Complete a program quality self-assessment.
 - Complete a quality improvement plan.
 - Make improvements included in the quality improvement plan.
 - Complete a request for reimbursement for the quality improvements made.

14. If a child with allowance attends two programs, can that allowance be split between the programs?
- Allowances may be split between two unapproved programs to be used for quality improvement (this may vary based on pilot area).
 - Allowances may not be split between one approved program and one unapproved program.
 - Allowances may be split between two approved programs if the two programs are collaborative partners and come together with one fiscal agent to complete a combined program plan.
15. Is this program being evaluated?
- Yes, this program is part of a pilot that is being evaluated by an organization called SRI.
 - Your child care/early education program will be contacted by SRI to invite you to participate in the evaluation activities.
16. What are the eligible uses for quality improvement?
- Allowances may not be used for construction or other capital expenses
 - Programs may use the allowances for quality improvements that will help programs improve their level of quality through the Parent Aware program in the following categories: family partnerships, teaching materials and strategies, tracking learning, and teacher training and education, including:
 - Individualized consultation
 - Training
 - Materials
 - Tuition for higher education
 - Fees for special licensure or credentials
 - Books or other materials needed for coursework
 - Fees for substitute teachers
 - Other uses as approved on an individual basis
17. Will I receive a 1099 from my allowance office if I receive over \$600 in pre-k allowances?
- Yes. If you receive over \$600 in pre-k allowances, you will receive a 1099 in the mail from your allowance office.
 - For additional information about taxes, please consult a tax attorney.
18. Where should I call for more information about allowances?
- If you live in North Minneapolis or the Wayzata School District, call: Hennepin County Front Door at (612) 348-4111.
 - If you live in Blue Earth or Nicollet County, call: Minnesota Valley Action Council at (507) 345-6822.
 - If you live in the City of St. Paul, call: Resources for Child Caring at (651) 641-6604.